AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material comprising the steps of:

disposing a powder comprising ~~one or more members selected from~~ an oxide of R^2~~, a fluoride of R3, and an oxyfluoride of R4~~ wherein R^2~~, R3 and R4 each are one~~ is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc on a sintered magnet form of a R^1-Fe-B composition wherein R^1 is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc, said sintered magnet form having a dimension of at least 0.5 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction, and

heat treating the magnet form and the powder at a temperature equal to or below the sintering temperature of the magnet in vacuum or in an inert gas.

2. (Original) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of up to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

3. (Original) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 2, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of up to 20 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 2 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

4. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the powder comprising ~~one or more members selected from~~ an oxide of R^2~~, a fluoride of R3, and an oxyfluoride of R4~~ is present in a magnet-surrounding space within a distance of 1 mm from the surface of the magnet form and at an average filling factor of at least 10%.

5. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the powder comprising ~~one or more members selected from~~ an oxide of R^2~~, a fluoride of R3, and an oxyfluoride of R4~~ has an average particle size of up to 100 μm.

6. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein ~~in said one or more members selected from an oxide of~~ R^2~~, a fluoride of R3, and an oxyfluoride of R4 wherein R2, R3 and R4 each are one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc, R2, R3 or R4~~ contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb.

7-9. (Canceled)

10. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, further comprising, after the heat treatment, effecting aging treatment at a temperature from 350° C to a temperature lower than the temperature of the heat treatment.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material ~~according to claim 1,~~ comprising the steps of:

disposing a powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 wherein R^2, R^3 and R^4 each are one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc on a sintered magnet form of a R^1-Fe-B composition wherein R^1 is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc, said sintered magnet form having a dimension of at least 0.5 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction, and

heat treating the magnet form and the powder at a temperature equal to or below the sintering temperature of the magnet in vacuum or in an inert gas,

wherein said powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 ~~wherein R2, R3 and R4 each are one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc and~~ having an average particle size of up to 100 μm is disposed in the surface of the magnet form as a slurry thereof dispersed in an aqueous or organic solvent.

12. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the sintered magnet form is cleaned with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

13. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein a surface layer of the sintered magnet form is removed by shot blasting before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

14. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein cleaning with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents, grinding, or plating or painting is carried out as a final treatment after the heat treatment.

15. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein said sintered magnet has a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side.

16. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of 0.5 to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

17. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated is obtained by compacting and sintering powder of a mother alloy containing R^1, Fe and B wherein R^1 is as defined in claim 1, and machining the thus obtained sintered block to a shape having a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

18. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material comprising the steps of:

disposing a powder comprising one or more members selected from a fluoride of R^3 and an oxyfluoride of R^4, wherein R^3 and R^4 each are one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc, on a sintered magnet form of a R^1-Fe-B composition wherein R^1 is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc, said sintered magnet form having a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of 1 to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction, and

heat treating the magnet form and the powder at a temperature equal to or below the sintering temperature of the magnet in vacuum or in an inert gas.

19. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of up to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

20. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of $R^{3,}$ and an oxyfluoride of R^4 is present in a magnet-surrounding space within a distance of 1 mm from the surface of the magnet form and at an average filling factor of at least 10%.

21. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 has an average particle size of up to 100 μm.

22. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein R^2, R^3 or R^4 contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb.

23. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein a powder comprising a fluoride of R^3 and/or an oxyfluoride of R^4 is used whereby fluorine is absorbed in the magnet form along with R^3 and/or R^4.

24. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 23, wherein R^3 and/or R^4 contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb, and the total concentration of Nd and Pr in R^3 and/or R^4 is lower than the total concentration of Nd and Pr in R^1.

25. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 23, wherein in the powder comprising a fluoride of R^3 and/or an oxyfluoride of R^4, the fluoride of R^3 and the R^4 oxyfluoride are contained in a total amount of at least 10% by weight, with the balance being one or more members selected from among a carbide, nitride, oxide, hydroxide and hydride of R^5,

wherein R^5 is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc.

26. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, further comprising, after the heat treatment, effecting aging treatment at a temperature from 350°C to a temperature lower than the temperature of the heat treatment.

27. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the sintered magnet form is cleaned with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

28. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein a surface layer of the sintered magnet form is removed by shot blasting before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

29. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein cleaning with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents, grinding, or plating or painting is carried out as a final treatment after the heat treatment.

30. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein said sintered magnet has a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side.

31. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of 0.5 to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

32. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 11, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated is obtained by compacting and sintering powder of another alloy containing R^1, Fe and B wherein R^1 is as defined in claim 1, and machining the thus obtained sintered block to a shape having a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

33. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 18, wherein the powder comprising one or more members selected from a fluoride of R^3 and an oxyfluoride of R^4 is present in a magnet-surrounding space within a distance of 1 mm from the surface of the magnet form and at an average filling factor of at least 10%.

34. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 18, wherein the powder comprising one or more members selected from a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 has an average particle size of up to 100 μm.

35. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 18, wherein R^3 or R^4 contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb.

36. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 18, wherein a powder comprising a fluoride of R^3 and/or an oxyfluoride of R^4 is used whereby fluorine is absorbed in the magnet form along with R^3 and/or R^4.

37. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 36, wherein

R^3 and/or R^4 contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb, and

the total concentration of Nd and Pr in R^3 and/or R^4 is lower than the total concentration of Nd and Pr in R^1.

38. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 36, wherein

in the powder comprising a fluoride of R^3 and/or an oxyfluoride of R^4, the R^3 fluoride and the R^4 oxyfluoride are contained in a total amount of at least 10% by weight, with the balance being one or more members selected from among a carbide, nitride, oxide, hydroxide and hydride of R^5,

wherein R^5 is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc.

39. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 18, further comprising, after the heat treatment, effecting aging treatment at a temperature from 350°C to a temperature lower than the temperature of the heat treatment.

40. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 18, wherein the sintered magnet form is cleaned with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

41. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 18, wherein a surface layer of the sintered magnet form is removed by shot blasting before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

42. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 18, wherein cleaning with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents, grinding, or plating or painting is carried out as a final treatment after the heat treatment.